

The Pig Story by Ben Hallowell (3)

While assigned to the CAG staff as LSO aboard the USS Ticonderoga (CVS 14) in the early '70s we headed to Pearl Harbor as the first stop on a 9-month WestPac deployment. Coincidentally a beloved former squadron CO had been assigned to CincPac staff on Ford Island. He invited the entire squadron to attend a luau to be held at his new quarters the day after the ship's arrival. The first day in port was monsoon like rain so everyone headed for the O Club as soon as it opened at 10AM. All we could do was drink Mai Tais which led to this grand strategy session amongst a bunch of grounded aviators. It was decided to bring a live pig on a leash to the former COs luau the next evening on Ford Island. What the CO would do with it was not a concern. Maybe keep it and raise it as a pet. My assignment was to procure the live pig and bring it back to the O Club. Other members of the team would be ready to take it from there. I called around until I found a farmer way out in the hills somewhere who said sure he'd sell me a live pig, so I headed out in a rented VW beetle in the pouring rain. Pretty soon I was way out in the sticks and it was pitch black, but I found the farm. The farmer was an imposing sight looked like a huge pirate with a black eye patch. There would be no haggling over price, I just wanted to get out of there alive. The farmer came back holding a squealing pig by one leg and loaded it in the front-end trunk of the VW with hatch left slightly open but tied down for air. The pig and I headed back. The pig was quiet the entire trip until we arrived at the main gate. The USMC Corporal asked for my ID and that is when the pig decided to squeal like a banshee. The guard's eyes got real big and I knew I had no choice but to run the gate. I made it to the O Club parking lot where the embarkation team took over. The O in C of pig embarkation had bragged during planning that he could handle a pig "no sweat" so I turned it all over to him. The idea was to put the pig in a red classified cruise box which had been brought ashore and readied with lettuce for pig transport. That was when all hell broke loose ... turns out the guy couldn't hold on to the pig, so the pig broke loose in the O Club parking lot in the pouring rain with 10 or so JO's trying to corral it. While I was trying to explain to the base duty officer who simultaneously arrived on scene that "no sir, I didn't realize I wasn't cleared at the main gate" the guys managed to get the pig into the classified cruise box. Next challenge was the Tico quarterback getting the cruise box with pig safely aboard. We were aboard and had cleared the quarter deck watch when the chaplain came up to us in a friendly way on the hangar deck. to ask us about our liberty that day - by that time the pig was rustling around we clearly had something alive in that

box so someone had the bright idea to start singing as a distraction - most chaplains like to sing so he joined in and we were able to transport the pig to my stateroom across from the barber shop which I shared with the CAG Ops officer. I made the pig a sort of nest in our stand-up closet and thought we were all set. My roommate returned from liberty only to inform me that the pig had peed in his brand-new golf shoes which I had overlooked when I made the nest. Not done for the night, we next had the brilliant idea to let the pig loose in the new squadron COs stateroom (we could hear the CO snoring away). We crept across the passageway and quietly let the pig inside. We closed the door and listened over the transom - we heard continued snoring interspersed now with oinks and grunts - all of a sudden "Holy Shit" the room exploded with noise as the CO came bounding out in his skivvies as if we were going to General Quarters. We collapsed with laughter; it was the perfect gotcha. So now the pig spent the rest of the night in his cruise box situated in the passageway outside the barber shop. Next morning, luau day, the word was out throughout the ship - there's a pig outside the barber shop. The JOs brought him all sorts of food - talk about hog heaven. That lasted until the Admiral decided to get a haircut and discovered the pig. The fun was over - the Admiral ordered his Marine orderly to "get that pig off my ship and notify the Captain I want to see him immediately". The pig still in his cruise box was unceremoniously removed from the ship but got no further than the forward brow. That's when Commander Naval Base Pearl Harbor said you cannot bring a live animal from ship to shore without proper clearance and quarantine. So, the pig stayed at the foot of the brow while the dispute as to final disposition was resolved. The sailors loved it and fed the pig everything from candy to ice cream as they passed by his box. Unfortunately, the pig keeled over hooves up - the flight surgeon was dispatched to determine what happened. He reported the pig apparently died of a heart attack probably from over-eating and stress. So, for the luau that evening we took the pig cruise box and all and gave him a burial at sea on the ferry to Ford Island. Many versions of this story have since been passed around but now you have the first-hand account from the guy who got the pig.